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ABSTRACT

The research study analyzed the information-gathering habits of academic historians. It is hoped that the research will lead to an understanding of the role of information in the research process and will ultimately be of use in the design of new information systems or the reorganization of existing systems. The first section contains a review of previous research, including studies which considered historians' use of sources through citation analysis. Fifty-two academic historians, representing faculties at Cornell University and the University of Rochester, were surveyed. The main objective was to identify the specific stages of research in progress and to isolate different sources of information behavior at each point in the research process. Methodology involved the critical incident technique applied in a self-administered mailed questionnaire. Five stages of research were identified as problem selection, detailed planning, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and writing-rewriting. Some conclusions were that there are different information needs associated with the different stages, and that primary materials or data of historical research are the most important information source in almost every stage. (Author/AV)

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INFORMATION-GATHERING HABITS OF ACADEMIC HISTORIANS

REPORT OF THE PILOT STUDY

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Introduction

Librarians will readily admit that their success is determined by how well they fulfill the needs of the communities they serve. Yet to do this they must not only know the specific needs of the individual but must adjust their services to meet these needs. It is not enough to impose existing or future information systems on the individual they must be changed in the face of specific information-seeking behavior. This current research is a descriptive analysis of the information-gathering habits of academic historians which it is hoped will lead to an understanding of the role of information in the research process and ultimately be of use in the design of new information systems or the reorganization of existing systems.

Since 1954 information use studies have accumulated in the natural and physical sciences and to some extent in certain specialities of the social sciences.[1-6] History, whether considered as one of the social sciences or humanities, has been largely ignored. This is not to say that reoccurring calls have not come for such research. As early as 1950 one commentator thought it would be useful to study "...the requirements of users of several types at the several stages in which they are when they come seeking information."[7] A recent AHA report saw the problem as "...the lack of specific knowledge of what researchers want from their services."[8] Finally Eric Boehm, of the American Bibliographical Center, when talking of future services to historians felt that, "The planners should be conversant with recent research on historians' expectations and habits."[9]

Literature Review - Historians' Information-Gathering Habits

Previous research aimed at assessing the information needs and uses of historians are not comparable and defy any attempt to synthesize them into a coherent picture of information gathering behavior. Several studies have considered the historians' use of sources through citation analysis. The two earliest studies were done at the University of Chicago where McAnally's (1952) national survey analyzed the characteristics of sources cited by historians in monographs, and Alston (1952) did the same for publications of the history faculty at Chicago. In both studies, which were restricted to American history, monographs were referred to more than other sources (McAnally 43.7 percent; Alston 25.9 percent).[10-11] Manuscripts, which accounted for 25.6 percent of the references in the Alston work, were responsible for only 10.3 percent of all citations in the McAnally's survey. Newspapers were highly cited in both studies with journals accounting for 9.2 percent of citations in McAnally and 13.4 percent in Alston's work. In a related study Rolland Stevens (1953) found that the historical method as used in Ph.D. research had an effect on the form and age of the materials used.[12]

There have been three subsequent citation studies each specializing in different areas of history. Littlepage (1959) analyzed citations of ten historians of thought in United States history. He found that 81 percent of their citations were to monographs and 17 percent to serial titles.[13] Obviously published materials are of great importance in the field of United States intellectual history. A reference analysis of journals was used in a recent survey (1972) to determine materials used by British historians.[14] Monographs were the most cited at 34.1 percent with journals accounting for 21.5 percent and manuscripts for 10.9 percent of all citations.[15]

The Bolles study (1975) which used the American Quarterly as its base combined history and political science into one subset for analysis. Although

monographs dominated as a source (50.6 percent), journals were highly cited at 26.3 percent, while manuscripts were cited at only 1.5 percent.[16] It should be pointed out that in these citation analysis the historian does not always cite what he reads, or read what he cites. More importantly, it does not show how these historians - authors obtained their information.

In 1967 a joint venture of the A.H.A., L.C., American Bibliographical Center and the National Archives was undertaken "... to determine the research habits of historians."[17] However broad in it conception, what the survey actually determined was the use of specific bibliographical tools and the historians appraisal of these tools. Also the usefulness of the data acquired in the survey is severely limited since the response rate was a meager 16.7 percent.[18] The findings are important in so far as the results constitute the only attempt on the national level to ascertain bibliographic habits of historians.

Historians listed as the bibliographical tools they used most frequently in their research fields: (1) General Guides (i.e.) L.C. Catalogues, Hamer's Guide; (2) Specialized bibliographies (i.e.) Harvard Guide, A.H.A. Guide to Historical Literature; (3) Periodicals.[19] When asked how they kept up with new publications, the respondents relayed primarily on those few journals that appear regularly on their desk and on the Sunday New York Times Book Review.[20] In related fields 60 percent of the respondents systematically used book reviews, while 20 percent listened to papers at meetings or read journals in these fields, and less than 10 percent frequently examined selective bibliographies in other fields.[21] Respondents in the only readers poll done by a historical journal also indicated the most important section was the book review followed by recent article listings and book notices.[22] Finally colleagues working in other fields were "used occasionally" by respondents in keeping abreast of recent developments.[23]

Another attempt to find out what use the members of an university history faculty made of bibliographic tools was undertaken by Barbara Hale (1970).

Although only a small sample (six questionnaires) were returned they reported subject bibliographies as most important with bibliographical reviews and regular scanning of lesser value.[24] Abstracting journals were determined least useful by this group of British historians.

While the British survey of the Information Requirements of Researchers in the Social Sciences (1971) did not include historians, it did analyze their responses when they did occur.[25] In polling their respondents about keeping informed about current literature by primary research interest 39 percent of the historians used abstract/periodicals, with 20 percent relying on personal contacts and 20 percent on book shops/book reviews.[26] Historians keep informed about current reserach in a secondary area in a similar manner (40 percent abs./per.; 15 percent personal contacts and book shops/book reviews; 5 percent books; 2 percent bibliographies and conferences; 22 percent other).[27] Clearly there are a great many difficulties in interpreting such classifications as abstract/periodicals or book shops/book reviews.

Walter Rundell's study (1970) of research and training in American graduate history programs have important implications for historians' information seeking style. In interviewing faculty and students from 114 Ph.D. granting institutions, Mr. Rundell pinpoints many factors which may influence academic historians information gathering behavior. He points out that many historians have an inclination to proceed from sources to topics.[28] Access to materials is named the greatest obstacle to researchers in history.[29] He also found that professors were not widely "acquainted with such basic tools as bibliographies, finding aids, and government documents" and failed to pass needed information about them to their students.[30] Photocopying is hailed as revolutionizing the historians research methods and consequently changing their information seeking style in the process.[31]

In 1927 the A.H.A. undertook an investigation into the productivity of Ph.D.'s in history. While the findings have little application today, they are of

interest since they serve as a base for comparison with a latter survey and it was the first attempt at a national survey of historians. With a 52 percent response rate the opinion was "... almost unanimous that the main duty of a Ph.D. is to teach," as opposed to doing research.[32] This finding was validated when the survey found that less than 25 percent of the doctorates in history were consistent producers.[33]

The American Council on Education as part of their rating the quality of graduate education (1966) polled historians and established a "profile of respondents." Historians averaged 2.7 books and 13 articles since receiving their highest degree. They spent 22 percent of their time on research and writing, while 52 percent was used for teaching and 19 percent for administration. In the previous four years they reported on average attending 3.9 regional and 4.7 national meetings per respondent.[34] From this data it is evident that historians were far more productive than was reported in the A.H.A. survey thirty years before. It is also interesting to note the number of journal articles being published which reflects what one recent commentator has observed "... articles in learned historical journals have gained as much influence as full-scale books, and often more."[35]

One noticable area not covered in this literature review concerns the manuals or books on historical method. Aside from their great numbers these cook books on how history should or should not be done are usually one man's personal thoughts on the problem. They can in no way be construed as empirical evidence on how historian's go about collecting information. There is, however, one exemplary work, which while not of the cook-book variety, can be classified as a treatise on historical method. This anthology of sixteen individual essays attempts to "... reveal just how historians went about choosing their subjects, doing their research, shaping their interpretations, and writing up the results."[36] The results are sixteen separate autobiographies of historical works depicting how

historians go about the everyday work of research. Two of the more interesting points that come across in the essays are the importance of peer recognition to historians and the use of colleagues as a source of ideas and directions for research work.[37]

[1]Marcia J. Bates, User Studies: A Review for Librarians and Information Scientists (Arlington, Virginia: ERIC Document Reproduction, ED047738).

[2]Richard A. Davis and Catherine A. Bailey, Bibliography of Use Studies (Philadelphia: Drexel Institute of Technology, 1964).

[3]Sylvia G. Faibisoff et al., An Introduction to Information and Information Needs: Comments and Readings (Syracuse, N.Y.: Center for the Study of Information and Education, Syracuse University, 1973).

[4]International Federation for Documentation, Index to User Studies (The Hague: Netherlands: International Federation for Documentation, 1974).

[5]Gail Schlacter and Dennis Thomison, Library Science Dissertations 1925-1972: An Annotated Bibliography (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited,1974).

[6]Thomas J. and Enid S. Waldhart, Communication Research in Library and Information Science; A Bibliography on Communications in the Sciences, Social Sciences and Technology (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1975).

[7]Carl Kraeling, " The Humanities: Characteristics of the Literature, Problems of Use and Bibliographic Organization," in Bibliographic Organization: Papers Presented before the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the Graduate Library School, July 24-29, 1950, ed: Jesse Shera and Margret Egan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p.125.

[8]American Historical Association, A.H.A. Bibliography Report: Toward a Central Bibliography Service (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, memo, 1976), p.16.

[9]Eric H. Boehm, " Current Emphasis in the Dissemination of Information about Manuscripts," in The Publication of American Historical Manuscripts, ed: Leslie W. Dunlap and Fred Shelley (Iowa City: University of Iowa Libraries, 1976),p.66.

[10]Arthur M. McAnally, " Characteristics of Materials Used in Research in United States History," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1951), p.37.

[11]Annie Marie Alston, "Characteristics of Materials Used by a Selected Group of Historians in their Research in United States History," (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1952), p.8.

[12]Rolland E. Stevens, " The Use of Library Materials in Doctoral Research: A Study of the Effect of Differences in Research Method," Library Quarterly,23 (January 1953): 40.

[13]John M. Littlepage, " A Checklist of Monographic and Serial Titles selected by Citation Analysis of the Works of Ten Historians of Thought in the United States," (M.A. thesis, Catholic University, 1959), p.23.

[14]Clyne Jones et al., "The Characteristics of the Literature used by Historians," Journal of Librarianship 4 (July 1972): 139

[15]Ibid., p.141.

[16]Charles A. Bolles, " Characteristics of the Literature of American Studies as Indicated by Bibliographic Citations," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1975), p.125.

[17]Dagmar H. Perman, ed., Bibliography and the Historian: The Conference at Belmont of the Joint Committee on Bibliographical Services to History, May, 1967 (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Clio Press, 1968), p.2.

[18]Ibid., p.8.

[19]Ibid., p.11.

[20]Ibid., p.12.

[21]Ibid., p.14.

[22]" Response to WHQ Survey," WHA Newsletter no.20 (August 1974): p.4.

[23]Perman, Bibliography, p.16.

[24]Barbara Hale, The Subject Bibliography of the Social Sciences and Humanities (New York: Pergamon Press, 1970), p.141.

[25]Investigation into Information Requirements of the Social Sciences, Research report no. 1 Information Requirements of Researchers in the Social Sciences, vol.1: Text (Bath University Library, May 1971), p.18.

[26]Information Requirements, vol II: Tables, table 169.

[27]Ibid., table 170.

[28]Walter Rundell, In Pursuit of American History; Research and Training In The United States (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma, 1970), p.108.

[29]Ibid., p.314.

[30]Ibid., p.328.

[31]Ibid., p.202.

[32]Marcus W. Jernegan, "Productivity of Doctors of Philosophy in History," American Historical Review 33 (October 1927): p.4.

[33]Ibid., p.2.

[34]Allan M. Carter, An Assessment of Quality in Graduate Education (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1966), p.38.

[35]Michael Kammen, "Clio and the Changing Fashions: Some Patterns in Current American Historiography," The American Scholar 44 (Summer 1975): p.491.

[36]L.P. Curtis, ed., The Historian's Workshop; Original Essays by Sixteen Historians (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p.XI.

[37]Ibid., p.183, 193, 198, 217, 256.

Evaluation of the Pilot-Study

I. Response Rate

The purpose of the pilot study was to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire design. This was to be accomplished by checking what kinds of problems the respondents encountered with the wording and arrangement of the questions and by the actual response rate.

Initially it was planned to send the questionnaire to the entire history faculty at Cornell University. While the mailing went off as planned, a serious problem soon came to my attention. The postage which was handled by the UMC mail room was inadequate and a terse note from the History Department at Cornell was forwarded. Immediately a check along with my apology, was dispatched to Cornell to make up the difference. There is no way of telling how this would bias the survey in terms of response rate. The returns from Cornell after one follow up letter were a rather disappointing 38.5 percent. It was at this point a desision was made to attempt a second mailing to determine if the postage problem had an influence on the response rate.

The University of Rochester was chosen for the second test since it was determined to be comparable both geographically and in size and quality with the Cornell department. A second mailing was prepared with the postage being double checked to assure not biasing the survey in the same manner. The results were somewhat better with a 63.1 percent return rate after one follow-up. I think it can be assumed that the postage problem did have some influence on the response rate.

Recommendations: Having done further reading in basic mail methodology, I am convinced that the response rate can be vastly improved by manipulating the questionnnaire format and mailing.[1-3] Perhaps through the use of some sort of photo-reduction and multilithing into a booklet form, with a formally authorized cover attached to lend to its importance. An intensive follow up campaign should

be utilized. The original mailing and follow-up letter would be followed by a replacement questionnaire after 3 or 4 weeks and a final letter with replacement after 2 months. This of course depends heavily on the funds available for this type of follow-up procedure.

II. Questionnaire

It was assumed in the pre-test that there should be a limit to the length of the questionnaire to assure a satisfactory postal response. The evidence of the response rate gives little support to this view. Nevertheless commonsense does suggest that length is a most important variable particularly if one wish to ensure the highest possible initial return rate.[4]

While the length of the questionnaire presented no problems there was some confusion over specific questions and these will have to be amended before the instrument can be used. The first two questions which were to identify the specific stage of the research in progress caused considerable confusion. Apparently the respondents (54.5 percent) felt that the "exact nature of the research" (Q1) and "what you are actually working on at the present time" (Q2) were exactly the same. As a result they answered one of the two and then simply referred back to it when answering the other. In any event since the information was acquired, even if they answered one of the questions, both items will be included in the final questionnaire.

Having isolated the stage of research, question 3 was intended to have respondents "rank", from one list, the most important source of information at that stage in their research. Since "literature" and "personal" methods of information seeking were grouped together in the list this researcher inadvertently labeled each as such within the same list. As a result in 45.5 percent of the returns the respondents ranked each category separately within the same list. This confusion made it impossible to rank the methods since you had two separate rankings within the same list. Obviously the headings of "literature" and

"Personal" methods will have to be dropped in preference for one unified list. This will ensure that no matter what source of information is being employed the most important will be ranked from one.

The questionnaire gave the respondent the additional option of recording his own alternatives to each question under the item marked "other". This provided an opportunity in the pilot study of checking to see if there were any categories that might have been left out relating to a specific question. Question 8, which was an attempt to ascertain the general methods used by historians in gaining information in their own area of expertise, proved to be the only item to which an additional alternative will be added. "Visiting and checking libraries or archives collections directly" was written in and ranked first by 18.1 percent of the respondents. As a result this category will be added to question 8.

Question 12, an open-ended question, was intended to provide a means for each respondent to express his personal views on historians' information gathering habits. In the pilot study it also served a second function, a place to record critical comments concerning this survey attempt. There appeared two critical comments concerning the questionnaire. One respondent felt that the questionnaire was too mechanistic for historians, that the way historians "do research" cannot be categorized so easily. This is a general criticism leveled at most mailed questionnaires, yet this shortcoming is outweighed by the fact that categorical answers can be more readily classified and statistically treated. The second critical comment was somewhat paradoxical in nature since on the one hand it praised the attempt and on the other it was highly critical of the validity of any findings of any such survey. In any event neither of these respondents made any recommendations on how to improve the questionnaire.

Finally it can be assumed that there may be significance in replies left blank on specific questionnaire items. This did not prove to be a problem in the present pilot study indicating that respondents did not react negatively to

specific questions. More than anything else the utility of questions in meeting the analytical needs of the objectives determined which items needed revision, which were missing altogether, and which could be dispensed with.

[1]Don A. Dillman et al., " Increasing Mail Questionnaire Response: A Four State Comparison," American Sociological Review 39 (October 1974): p.744-56.

[2]Paul L. Erdos, Professional Mail Surveys (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p.39-42; 85-88.

[3]Christopher Scott, "Research on Mail Surveys," Journal of the Royal Statistical Society 124 (Part2, 1961): p.143-205.

[4]Erdos, p.39; Paul R. Salomone and Glenn C. Miller, Strategies for Increasing Response Rates to Mailed Questionnaires: An Experimental Study (Syracuse, N.Y.: Studies in Vocational Choice and Career Planning, Syracuse University), p.6.

Note

Ideally the relationship between information-gathering behavior and the variables of methodology, field of expertise and type of research should have been explored in the pilot study. Regrettably no provision was made for pre-coding for possible use in statistical interpretations. The tables and relationships used in this pilot study report were done manually. In the final survey the questionnaire will be pre-coded and the results converted into machine readable form.

Pilot Study

The purpose of analyzing the results of this pilot study are threefold; (1) evaluating the findings to determine if certain data has been overlooked, (2) to find out if the data as collected will answer the objectives of this research project and (3) it permits a check of planned statistical and analytical procedures. The main objective of this descriptive research project was to identify the specific stage of research in progress and isolate different sources or forms of information behavior at each point in the research process of academic historians. This would be accomplished through use of the critical incident technique applied in a self-administered mailed questionnaire. Additional questions attempted to determine if different methods or specific areas of research would effect the sources used at each stage. Also included were three general questions which attempted to find where historians received the stimulus for their research ideas, what methods they employed in keeping abreast of findings in their own research area and where they went for information in related or new research areas.

The present study is concerned with the information-seeking behavior of academic historians as they occur in the different phases of their research project. The "phase effect" as defined by Rubenstein means a research project can be roughly divided into a series of stages or phases, each of which may have different information requirements.[1] Although Rubenstein's research was confined to R & D personnel, this method of measurement has since been used by Werner in medicine[2] and Garvey et al. in psychology.[3] Marilyn White's study of academic economists making use of this methodology also provides a fine review of the literature on "phase effect".[4]

To determine a particular research phase the critical incident technique was chosen. The critical incident technique has been defined as "essentially a procedure for gathering certain important facts concerning behavior in defined

situations".[5] In this survey the "situation" is the research project that the academic historian is "actually working on at the present time" (Questions 1 & 2). Thus we will attempt to determine the particular phase, using the critical incident technique, of the individual historian and the relationship of this phase to the channels used.

A major problem in using the critical incident technique relates to setting up the categories into which the incident data must be classed. In any attempt to define research stages one must contend with little research on the subject for social scientists in general and none on historians in particular. Indeed most historians would probably order their work to include the stages chosen yet some may give more attention to certain stages and little to others.[6] Often there is an overlapping between stages with work going on in several stages simultaneously.

For this study the classification of the research stages, which evolved in part from an attempt to classify the pilot study results and in part from reviewing the literature,[7] are as follows:

Stage 1 - Problem selection: generation of ideas; preliminary work (i.e.) reading, discussion, exploration of funding; determining unanswered questions and hypothesizing.

Stage 2 - Detailed planning of data collection: literature searching; refinement of hypothesis; detailed work on methodology.

Stage 3 - Data collection.

Stage 4 - Analyzing and interpretating of data.

Stage 5 - Present findings; writing, rewriting and evaluation.

In present study sources or forms of information behavior have been defined as the types of information channels generally used by academic historians during their research projects. Ten channels, which include both personal and literature, were decided on, based on the pre-test and pilot studies. It must be understood that in any comparison between channels that they themselves are not equivalent nor are they always equal. By this is meant that while a manuscript

is primary information to the historian's work, a cited footnote may lead the historian to a book which will provide the primary material.

[1]Albert H. Rubenstein, "Timing and Form of Researchers' Needs for Technical Information," Journal of Chemical Documentation 2 (January 1962): 29.

[2]David J. Werner, " AStudy of the Information-Seeking Behavior of Medical Researchers" (Masters thesis, Northwestern University, 1965), pp.13-14.

[3]William D. Garvey et al., "The Dynamic Scientific-Information User," Information Storage and Retrieval 10 (No. 3/4, 1974): 129.

[4]Marilyn D. White, "Communications Behavior of Academic Economists" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1971), pp.5-11.

[5]John C. Flanagan, "The Critical Incident Technique," Psychological Bulletin 51 (July 1954): 335.

[6]Philip C. Brooks, Research in Archives; The Use of Unpublished Primary Sources (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p.15.

[7]Investigation into Information Requirements of the Social Sciences, Research Report No. 5, The Research Procedures of Social Scientists (Bath University Library, November 1971), pp.20-22.

Analysis and Results

Respondent Characteristics

The survey method of research was used in this study with data gathered through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 52 academic historians representing the faculties of two private universities granting doctoral degrees in history. Of the 52 sent only 45 were accepted, the others not being on campus at the time of the mailing. Responses were received from a total of 22 historians resulting in a response rate of 48.8 percent. All those who responded were currently engaged in research so that all respondents could be included in the final tabulations.

A majority of the respondents, 59.1 percent were full professors, with 18.12 percent being associates and 22.7 percent assistant professors. As might be expected as member of doctoral degree programs, over 95 percent held the doctorate degree. Half received their degrees since 1964 while 81.8 percent were granted their doctorates since 1959.

Apart from universal history, which does not form a large part of the total production of historical scholarship, hitory may be subdivided readily along geographical and chronological lines. In each of these geographical units the pattern of historical research may be expected to repeat itself. History is written according to generally accepted procedures and theories of history. These will vary from period to period. These differences in procedures along geographical and chronological lines, may be a most important variable in determining historians' information seeking habits. The current research arbitrarily listed twelve research areas with four areas making up 54.4 percent of the total.

The importance of the variable of research area is manifest when one considers the conditions of research in history. In many cases the research accomplished must be done elsewhere than in the college library or immediate vicinity. Such research requires traveling perhaps hundreds of miles for state

history and thousands of miles for national history or for trips abroad for foreign history. Of the respondents polled, 72.4 percent were involved in research in a foreign country with only 27.2 percent doing research in American history. It must be kept in mind that of those doing research in American history some would have to travel abroad for materials relating to colonial, diplomatic or comparative history, and certainly all had some traveling to do within the United States.

Stage Research and Channel Usage

We started with the assumption that the stage of research would determine which channels of information were used. Since we had no clear indication how the channels would be utilized we collected information on all channel use by research stage and then reduce the findings to meaningful statistics.

We began with the five stages of research discussed earlier: problem selection, detailed planning, data collection, analysis and interpretation and writing - rewriting. The frequency distribution of the research stages of respondents turned out surprisingly uniform despite the small number of cases. Stage 3 accounted for 31.8 percent of the respondents with stage 5, 27.3 percent and the other three stages accounting for 13.6 percent each.

According to the critical incident data, in all stages, the respondents depended more heavily on literature channels to obtain information (Table 3 & 4). The six literature channels were cited by a considerably higher percentage of respondents than the four personal channels (75.5 percent for literature channels and 21.2 percent for personal channels).

A broader picture of channel use emerges when respondents were asked to rank the channels which dominated their information-gathering behavior at that particular moment in their research. From the data of cited channels (Table 3) it is apparent historians have a tendency to use a combination of all types of resources for information. In ranking their most important channels, all respondents named texts and monographs while going straight to the original sources accounted for 66.6 percent of the responses. It is probably a rule of thumb in all research to begin by searching for gaps in the existing literature. Also standard works provide background material and references to more detailed research on a topic.

Historians who have already emerged in a special area may chose to go

straight to original sources already known by them to determine which questions are to be asked. This implies a knowledge of either the kind of information desired or the purpose it would serve in the research. The respondents under these circumstance could thus alter, if necessary, their normal routines of information-gathering. This expertise may apply to the current research since 70 percent of the respondents have had their degrees for 10 years or longer and a like number hold a rank of associate professor or higher (Table 11 & 12).

In the second stage, as historians became more involved in their projects, they were able to specify their information needs more precisely. In this phase the respondents generally needed information to serve two functions, providing for the location of sources and developing methodologies. As a result the channels used most often were primary sources, monographs and correspondence. Again historians who are already familiar with the research area will know where the documents are located and which may be useful. This group can go directly to the original documents (66.6 percent).

In stage two monographs can be used either as a source to original documents or to help respondents develope methodologies if a special one is to be used (66.6 percent). Monographs in this context can be thought of as guides to pertinent materials and where one can find data on the same or related subjects. Correspondence (66.6 percent) is also useful in tracking down the location of sources in more distant geographically areas. The incident data also revealed that guides to original sources and personal contacts were also utilized in the planning stage (Table 4).

The data collection stage for historians means simply going directly to the primary sources (100 percent). Although all channels were cited (Table 3) extensively during this phase, historians ranked monographs and journals as their next most important source after primary materials (Table 4). Journals were probably used to keep abreast of any new developments taking place in particular

areas of research. At the same time monographs provided the background or scenario against which the respondents piece of historical research is to be written.

Respondents sought information that provided analytical assistance in the fourth stage of their projects. They continued to look for information but not to the extent that they had in the previous stage. While still surveying monographs and primary materials they sought information in journals and through personal channels (Table 4). Personal contacts were probably used either as a sounding board for contemplated interpretations of evidence or for analytical assistance. The extensive use of journals in this stage may be a result of felt need to keep abreast of new interpretations which might effect the respondents evidence.

In the final stage of research, represented as writing, re-writing and evaluation, the whole spectrum of channels were again cited as being highly utilized (Table 3). They again ranked primary sources as most important with monographs and journals also being highly used (Table 4). The reason for such a high estimation of primary sources may be the result of the great amount of verification of citations that goes on in the final writing phase. Again the respondents probably also wished to know if there were any new research or interpretations being published that might be usefull in their projects. The high usage of a variety of personal channels could mean that these respondents were seeking evaluations from their peers before the final manuscript was presented for publication (Table 4).

Overall literature channels were used more extensively than personal channels by historians during their research projects. Primary materials were used in every phase of research being rank most important in the second, third and fifth stages. This seems to verify the assumption that historians are bound to return to his original text, again and again. Monographs, footnotes and

journals were highly utilized with monographs ranked very important in the first, second and fifth stages and journals in the fourth phase. Perhaps because of the nature of our target population, teaching in graduate history departments, they were already familiar enough with their research areas that they depended little on guides to original sources or published bibliographies. It could also be that these tools are inadequate in the respondent's area and are not highly utilized.

Personal channels were used most extensively in earlier stages when respondents were seeking to define problems or identify locations or sources of information. They were also used in the fourth stage whne researchers were trying to obtain help in analyzing their data.

In drawing any conclusions of historians' stage behavior it is evident that a combination of channels were utilized in each phase. This is probably due to the nature of historical research, which can be easily categorized on paper, but proves rather serendipity in practice. An historian may be working on various stages simultaneously (i.e.) he may be doing a continuous up-dating of his information through reading current research while at the same time reading through primary materials. Another possiblity is that data collection for the historian, which is predominately reading primary materials, may be done back at the office thanks to the technology of photoduplication.

Special Methodologies

The methodologies being employed by historians were thought to be a factor in determining which channels they would utilize. Since the compilations used in the pilot study were manually, no attempt was made to explore the relationship between methodology employed and channel choice. Hopefully in the final survey some means of mechanical manipulation will be available in order to investigate this relationship.

In the pilot study 68.2 percent of the respondents were making use of social science conceptualizations in their work (Table 5). This may be a factor in the extensive use of monographs in each stage of research and points out the interdisciplinary approach to historical research. Suprisingly just over half of the respondents were using quantitative research techniques in their projects. This illustrates the usefulness of monographs and journals especially in areas where most historians have little expertise or background. This finding is also interesting in terms of the controversy which periodically surrounds the use of such techniques in historical scholarship.

Over one-third of the respondents made use of the older technique of prosopography while 27.3 percent employed computers in their research. The newer methods of oral history and psycho-history were not as heavily used. Finally only a fourth of all respondents reported that they were not using any of the listed methods and were depending solely on the traditional narrative approach to their research. Perhaps these results give us some indication how far the historian has moved away from his traditional stereotyped image. The methods listed and their wide usage may indicate that far from being "new" techniques for historians they have already been incorporated in their research processes and may even be considered commonplace in historical research.

Stimulus for Ideas

Any attempt to ascertain the chief sources of research ideas is, at best, highly suspect. This is due to the obscure and ambiguous process of which so little is known. In fact one of the interesting findings in this research was that respondents chose to use only the categories provided for in the questionnaire. These categories were assembled from the findings of the pre-test and previous studies relating to this problem. It was felt that a whole universe of these elusive stimuli might surface, yet not one respondent added a category to our list even though ample space was provided to do so.

Respondents were asked to rate on a ten point scale the importance of different sources according to their value as a stimulus of new ideas in their research. Previous research was cited and ranked highest as the chief source of new ideas for historians (Table 6). Primary materials and "thinking about historical problems" were the next most cited and highly ranked sources of ideas for the respondents. Personal channels, such as discussions with colleagues and meetings, were accorded a low ranking. This finding is somewhat paradoxical when one remembers that the respondents did make considerable use of personal channels in the second and fourth stages of their research (Table 4). This may indicate that hisorians as a group do not seek ideas from colleagues, but rather they are more interested in acquiring information with factual content from such experts.

Problems in Current Research

Respondents were asked to indicate which, if any, special problems they had encountered in their current research. The most frequently cited problem was that of "time" (90.9 percent). Apparently most historians feel that with adequate time at their disposal they could overcome any other problems. Volume and location of materials were mentioned as the next most important problems encountered in their current projects (Table 7). Apparently money was not thought to be as pressing a problem as the above since only 28.5 percent listed financial backing as a major problem.

Channel Use in One's Own Research Area

At this point respondents were asked to indicate and rank the channel or method employed in obtaining information in their own research area. The percentage of respondents citing each channel varied widely from over 80 percent using footnotes, journals and separately published bibliographies to only 13.6 percent using abstracting services (Table 8). Personal channels were also

cited more widely than they were used in the research phase. Apparently the invisible college as it has been explored in the physical and biological sciences may have its counterpart in history. However, the existence of this informal network among historians is impossible to validate without further research pointed in this direction.

A very noticeable feature of these findings is the comparatively little use made of abstracting and indexing services (Table 8). This could be in part due to the fact that history is not blessed with the variety of services available to other disciplines. Also those existing are general in their format rather than specialized as are needed by the individual historian. The Belmount study also found that historians criticized existing services because they were not current enough.

The rankings of channels follows closely the percentages established in the citation count with footnotes, journals and separately published bibliographies rated much higher than other sources in obtaining information in one's own field (Table 8). The widespread use of footnotes rather than the more formal channels indicates that respondents tended to use channels that were accessible, easy to use and relatively efficient. Further footnotes allow these researchers to judge the value of the article in which they are cited which is missing in indexing and abstracting publications.

Channel Use in Related Research Areas

When secondary fields of interest were related to channel use a rather different picture emerges. Predictably book reviews and journal indexes were cited and ranked as the two most used methods in obtaining information in secondary areas of research (Table 9). Apparently these two channels are used by historians in much the same way as they are in other disciplines to keep abreast in related areas. Personal channels were also used widely in the form of consulting colleagues and attendance at meetings. Respondents were willing to listen to

information tips from subject specialists although they probably did not like it that way. Finally historians made use of review papers to keep abreast. This is somewhat of a surprise since there are not many review papers published in history.

Conclusion

No definite conclusions can be drawn from this pilot study, yet there are observable tendencies to be pointed out. Remembering our major concern was with the stages in the research process as they are related to information-gathering behavior in academic historians some conclusions are:

(1) Our data indicated that there were different information needs associated with different stages of historical work.

(2) Primary materials or the data of historical research are the most important source of information in almost every stage of historical research

(3) Personal channels, while not used widely as in the physical and social sciences, are an important source of information at certain stages to academic historians.

(4) Historians rarely relied on only one or two channels for information. The tendency was to use all available means to locate needed information.

(5) Historians research procedures appear rather serendipity in practice and there was a tendency to be working at different stages simultaneously.

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TABLES

TABLE 1

Survey Response

	Mailed	Not on Campus	Accepted	Returned	Percentage
Cornell University	30	4	26	10	38.5%
University of Rochester	22	3	19	12	63.1%
Total	52	7	45	22	48.8%

TABLE 2

Frequency distribution of the research stages of respondents (N-22)

Research Stage	Respondents (N)	Percentage
Stage 1 - Problem selection - generation of ideas; Preliminary work (ie) reading, discussion, exploration of funding. Determine unanswered questions and hypothesize.	3	13.6%
Stage 2 - Detailed planning of data collection - literature searching; refinement of hypothesis; detailed work on methodology.	3	13.6%
Stage 3 - Data collection	7	31.8%
Stage 4 - Analyze and interpret data	3	13.6%
Stage 5 - Present findings; writing-rewriting evaluation	6	27.3%

TABLE 3

Frequency distribution of cited channels by research stage

Channel	Stage 1 (N-3) %	Rank	Stage 2 (N-3) %	Rank	Stage 3 (N-7) %	Rank	Stage 4 (N-3) %	Rank	Stage 5 (N-6) %	Rank	Totals (N-22) %	Rank
Text or Monograph	100	1	100	1	66.6	3	100	1	100	1	86.4	2
Footnotes	100	1	66.6	2	83.3	2	100	1	100	1	86.4	2
Journals	100	1	100	1	66.6	3	100	1	100	1	86.4	2
Primary Materials	100	1	100	1	100	1	100	1	100	1	100	1
Published Bibliography	100	1	66.6	2	50	4	33.3	3	66.6	2	59.1	3
Guides to original sources	66.6	2	66.6	2	50	4	66.6	2	66.6	2	59.1	3
Correspondence	33.3	3	66.6	2	66.6	3	33.3	3	66.6	2	54.5	4
Interviewing	-		33.3	3	16.6	6	-		33.3	3	18.1	7
Meetings	33.3	3	33.3	3	33.3	5	-		33.3	3	27.3	6
Personal Contacts	33.3	3	66.6	2	66.6	3	33.3	3	33.3	3	45.5	5
Other	-		33.3	3	16.6	6	-		-		9.1	8

TABLE 4

Frequency of Channels cited 1st or 2nd by research stage

Channel	Stage 1 (N-3) %	Rank	Stage 2 (N-3) %	Rank	Stage 3 (N-7) %	Rank	Stage 4 (N-3) %	Rank	Stage 5 (N-6) %	Rank	Totals (N-22) %	Rank
Text or Monograph	100	1	66.6	1	28.6	2	66.6	2	50	2	54.5	2
Footnotes	-		-		14.3	3			16.6	4	8.9	5
Journals	33.3	3	33.3	2	28.6	2	100	1	33.3	3	40.9	3
Primary Materials	66.6	2	66.6	1	100	1	33.3	3	83.3	1	77.3	1
Published Bibliography											-	
Guides to original sources			33.3	2							4.5	6
Correspondence			66.6	1			33.3	3	16.6	4	18.1	4
Interviewing									16.6	4	4.5	6
Meetings	33.3	3							16.6	4	4.5	6
Personal Contacts	33.3	3	33.3	2	14.3	3	33.3	3			18.1	4
Other			33.3	2							4.5	6

33

TABLE 5

Frequency distribution of special methodologies employed by respondents

Methodologies	Respondents (N)	Percentage
Prosopography	8	36.4
Use of Social Science Conceptualizations	15	68.2
Interviewing (Oral History)	1	4.5
Computers	6	27.3
Quantitative Research (Statistical Analysis)	12	54.5
Psycho-historical Methods	4	18.2
None	6	27.3

TABLE 6

Frequency and rank distribution of chief sources of new ideas

	Chief Sources			Ranked First or Second		
	N	%	Rank	N	%	Rank
Previous research (your own)	14	63.6	1	16	72.7	1
Discussions with colleagues	3	13.6	5	3	13.6	8
Reading secondary literature	4	18.2	4	7	31.8	4
Omissions in the literature	1	4.5	6	6	27.6	5
Meeting (conferences)	3	13.6	5	5	22.7	6
Contemporary observations of society	1	4.5	6	4	18.2	7
Primary sources	10	45.5	2	15	68.2	2
Thinking about historical problems	5	22.7	3	14	63.6	3

TABLE 7

Frequency distribution of problems in current research

Problems	(N)	Percentage
Financial backing	7	31.8
Time	20	90.9
Location of primary materials	11	50.0
Volume of materials available	12	54.5
Identification of original sources	3	13.6
Availability of origianl sources	2	9.1

TABLE 8

Frequency and rank distribution of channel use employed in one's own research to obtain information.

Channels	Cited (N)	Cited Percentage	Ranked first (N)	Ranked first (%)	Ranked first Rank	Ranked 1st or 2nd (N)	Ranked 1st or 2nd (%)	Ranked 1st or 2nd Rank
Footnotes and other cited reference	20	90.9	6	27.3	1	12	54.5	1
Book reviews	17	77.3	2	9.1	4	4	18.2	4
Separately published bibliographies	18	81.8	4	18.2	2	6	27.3	3
Journals	20	90.9	3	13.6	3	8	36.3	2
Consulted colleague	16	72.7	1	4.5	5	3	13.6	5
Meetings	9	40.9	1	4.5	5	1	4.5	6
Correspondence	12	54.5	-			1	4.5	6
Indexing publications	7	31.8	1	4.5	5	1	4.5	6
Abstracting services	3	13.6	-			-		
Students	7	31.8	-			1	4.5	6
Other (specify) *	5	22.7	4	18.2	2	4	18.2	4

*Visiting libraries and Archival collections directly and checking their holdings were given 4 firsts under "other".

36

TABLE 9

Frequency and rank distribution of channels used in keeping up in related fields

	Cited		Ranked First			Ranked First or Second		
	(N)	Percentage	(N)	(%)	Rank	(N)	(%)	Rank
Journal indexes or listings	20	90.9	6	27.3	1	8	36.3	2
Book reviews	20	90.9	6	27.3	1	13	59.1	1
Review papers	11	50.0	-			4	18.2	4
Colleagues	12	54.5	4	18.2	2	6	27.3	3
Meetings	13	59.1	1	4.5	4	4	18.2	4
Personal reference file	4	18.2	-			1	4.5	6
Current newspapers	3	13.6	2	9.1	3	2	9.1	5
Separately published bibliographies	15	68.2	2	9.1	3	4	18.2	4
Abstracting services	2	9.1	-			-		

TABLE 10

Frequency distribution of research areas of respondents

Research area	(N)	Percentage
Modern British History	2	9.1
Early British History	1	4.5
Modern European History	3	13.6
American Cultural and Intellectual History	3	13.6
American Colonial History	2	9.1
American Foreign Policy	1	4.5
Middle Eastern History	1	4.5
Byzantine History	1	4.5
Far Eastern History	3	13.6
Latin-American History	1	4.5
Russian History	1	4.5
Medieval History	3	13.6

TABLE 11

Frequency distribution of Terminal degree and degree date of respondent

Terminal degree	(N)	Percentage
Doctorate	21	95.4
Master's degree or less	1	4.5
Degree Date		
1942-1958	3	13.6
1959-1964	7	31.8
1965-1967	4	18.2
1968-1975	7	31.8

TABLE 12

Frequency distribution of academic rank of respondents

Academic rank	(N)	Percentage
Full professor	13	59.1
Associate professor	4	18.2
Assistant professor	5	22.7
Instructor	-	

REVISED QUESTIONNAIRE

If you are currently engaged in research, please fill in the whole form. If this does not apply to you, please turn to question 8. If any of the questions do not allow you to give full answers, please feel free to add comments.

Research Needs

1.) Please state briefly the title and the exact nature of the research in which you are involved or, if you are not involved at the moment, which you have completed in the last year.

2.) What are you actually working on at the present time?

3.) At this point in your research which of the following methods are you using to obtain information? (Check all the methods that apply in column 1.)

Rank		Column 1
( )	a. texts or monographs	( )
( )	b. footnotes or other cited references	( )
( )	c. journals	( )
( )	d. primary materials [original sources]	( )
( )	e. published bibliographies	( )
( )	f. guides to original sources	( )
(x)	g. correspondence	( )
( )	h. interviewing	( )
( )	i. meetings [conferences]	( )
( )	j. personal contacts	( )
( )	k. other [specify]_____	( )

4.) Consider all of the methods checked in question 3 and rank the four methods you are using most frequently at this point in your research. Use the column marked "Rank" in question 3 to answer this question. Rank from 1 as high.

5.) Are you using any of the following methodologies in your current research?

a.	prosopography	( )
b.	use of social science conceptualizations	( )
c.	interviewing [oral history]	( )
d.	computers	( )
e.	quantitative research [statistical analysis]	( )
f.	psycho-historical methods	( )
g.	other [specify]_____	( )
h.	none	( )

6.) Please rate the following according to their value as a stimulus or source of new ideas for your current research:

	no value								most value
a. previous research [your own]	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b. discussions with colleagues	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
c. reading secondary literature	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
d. omissions in the literature	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
e. meetings [conferences]	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
f. contemporary observations of society	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
g. primary sources	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
h. thinking about historical problems	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
i. other [specify] _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
j. other [specify] _____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

7.) Have any of the following presented you with special difficulty during your current research? (Check all that apply.)

a. financial backings . . . . . ( )
b. time . . . . . ( )
c. location of primary materials. . . . . ( )
d. volume of materials available. . . . . ( )
e. identification of original sources . . . . . ( )
f. availability of original sources . . . . . ( )
g. other [specify]_____ . . . ( )

Information Needs

We are also interested in finding out about the general methods you use to obtain information in your field of expertise. The next two questions address this problem.

8.) What tools or methods do you use in locating or becoming aware of needed information in your work? (Check the methods that apply in column 1.)

Rank			Column 1
( )	a.	footnotes or other cited references	( )
( )	b.	book reviews.	( )
( )	c.	separatedly published bibliographies.	( )
( )	d.	journals.	( )
( )	e.	consulted colleague	( )
( )	f.	meetings.	( )
( )	g.	correspondence.	( )
( )	h.	indexing publications	( )
( )	i.	abstracting services.	( )
( )	j.	students.	( )
( )	k.	checking libraries or archives directly	( )
( )	l.	other [specify]_____ . . .	( )

9.) Consider all of the methods checked in question 8 and rank the four methods you used most frequently. Use the column marked "Rank" in question 8 to answer this question. Rank from 1 as high.

There are a number of methods which historians can use to keep up-to-date in related fields, the next two questions address this problem.

10.) Thinking now of the fields where you try to keep up with current developments in detail, which of these channels is the most important in calling your attention to these developments? (Check the methods in column 1.)

Rank			Column 1
( )	a.	journal indexes or listings	( )
( )	b.	book reviews.	( )
( )	c.	review papers	( )
( )	d.	colleagues.	( )
( )	e.	meetings.	( )
( )	f.	personal reference file	( )
( )	g.	current newspapers.	( )
( )	h.	separately published bibliographies	( )
( )	i.	abstracting services.	( )
( )	j.	other [specify]_____ . .	( )

11.) Consider all of the choices in question 10 and rank the four methods you consider most important in calling your attention to current developments. Use the column marked "Rank" in question 10 to answer this question. Rank from 1 as high.

12.) What additional comments can you make on the information-gathering habits of historians?

Personal Information

13.) What is your highest academic degree? _____

14.) When did you receive this degree? _____

15.) What is your field of specialization? _____

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PROJECT: INFORMATION GATHERING HABITS OF HISTORIANS
Director: Peter A. Uva
Questionnaire #

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November 19, 1976

INFORMATION GATHERING HABITS OF HISTORIANS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Professor

We have not received your reply to the questionnaire for the study of the information gathering habits of historians which was sent to you on November 5th. We realize that you are probably very busy at this time in the school year but hope you will complete and return your questionnaire within the next few days.

This is the first time historians have been the subjects of information research although professional organizations in other disciplines, such as psychology and the biological sciences, are currently sponsoring major projects to study the informal and formal communication among their members.

With the limited sample we are using your reply is doubly important. The replies will not be identified with particular institutions or individuals. The study will analyze aggregate characteristics only.

If you would like to receive a summary of the findings of the study, please indicate this on your questionnnaire and we will send it to you when it is available.

Thank you for your time. We hope to hear from you soon.

Yours truly,

Peter A. Uva